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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a case study that examined trends in centralization and loss of autonomy in higher education. The study focused on the policy process through which one state both reduced its education administration (EA) programs and developed standards for administrator licensure. Participants (N=15) in the study included a legislator, an EA professor, a school of education dean, a legislative staffer, a prominent educator, the standards board director, and other stakeholders. Each was interviewed for an average of 45 minutes and the results were transcribed and analyzed. Two distinct phases (legislative oversight and consensus-building among stakeholders) emerged from the case analysis. In the first phase, two charismatic leaders were able to convince the legislature to cut EA programs, implement quality standards for entrance to EA programs, and establish standards for administrator licensure. EA professors had little influence during this phase because legislators perceived that universities were unable to reform from within; professors were seen as part of the problem. In the second phase, the policy-making process switched gears to a democratic, collegial model, as school-administrator standards were determined. This phase included behind-the-scene business community influences; stakeholder groups, mainly superintendents and principals; and, to some extent, EA professors. (Contains 19 references.) (RJM)

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State Centralization, Autonomy, and the EA Professoriate: A Case Study

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Abstract

State centralization and the specter of IHEs losing their autonomy comprised the political backdrop for this single-case study in which investigators analyzed the policy-setting process through which one state (a) reduced its EA programs and (b) developed standards for administrator licensure. Two distinct phases (legislative oversight and consensus-building among stakeholders) emerged from case analysis. In the first phase, two charismatic leaders leveraged national and state views of weak EA programs, a perceived inability of universities to reform from within, a state history of centralization, and external, public pressure for change and improvement in public education to legislate the machinery for reducing programs (from 12 to 7 programs) and developing standards both for admission to EA programs and licensure. In the second phase the policy-making process switched gears to a democratic, collegial model, as school administrator standards were determined, with behind-the-scene business community influence, through stakeholder groups, mainly superintendents and principals, and, to some extent, EA professors.

State Centralization, Autonomy, and the EA Professoriate: A Case Study

> Now higher education's turn has come. It is likely to be severely downsized and transformed in the coming years. Likely policies include elimination of tenure, consolidation of campuses, departments, and programs, cutbacks in staff, more students per faculty member, more teaching contact hours, setting of priorities by politicians, outside interference in internal campus affairs.... Most reforms aim to increase productivity but they entail reducing autonomy as well. (House, 1994, p. 29)

House predicted two major state education policy trends in higher education: state centralization and loss of autonomy. He was particularly pessimistic in depicting the 1990s as a period of (a) ideological attacks on higher education (e.g., Bloom, 1987; Sykes, 1988); and, (b) economic retrenchment caused both by Reagan's economic policies and by escalating costs of higher education.

Prestine's (1991) case study on higher education vulnerability in Wisconsin presaged House's predictions. Prestine analyzed the inability of an elite education faculty to close its ranks and protect itself politically from inroads made upon its autonomy by the state education agency (SEA). Prestine used political systems theory (autonomy vs. control) in analyzing the University of Wisconsin school of education's political struggle with its SEA. She predicted increased state centralization and

standardization of higher education programs already evident at the K-12 level.

The case study reported on this paper extends these trends of centralization and loss of autonomy for higher education. The investigators analyze the policy process through which one state (a) reduced its education administration programs, and (b) developed standards for administrator licensure.

Conceptual Framework

Centralization and loss of autonomy seem likely to be enduring pieces in the policy environment for institutes of higher education (IHE). Within the macro policy environment, the field of public education, on which attacks on have been historically vitriolic (e.g., Finn, 1987; Damerell, 1985), is particularly vulnerable. Within this field, education administration (EA) may be the most vulnerable. For EA programs prepare principals and superintendents and criticism of public school administrators historically stems from cyclical dissatisfaction with public schooling in general (Griffiths, Stout, & Forsyth, 1987).

Following the publication of A Nation at Risk (1983), critics lambasted EA programs. Inferior institutions had open admissions policies and low-ability students with few career options (Achilles, 1984). Programs had ill-defined performance criteria and little relevance to practitioners:

> Most programs for training school administrators range in quality from embarrassing to disastrous. This is because most faculty are only marginally more knowledgeable than their students, admission standards are weak and performance

> criteria ill-defined. Uncertainty of purpose and lack of self-esteem among educational administration professors lead to low status in the school of education and the university; linkages to practitioners are weak, and few persons teaching in doctoral programs are qualified to supervise research. (Griffiths, 1988, p. 6, citing Hawley)

The National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration (1987) was ominous, since it called for a culling of programs from among its own ranks:

> There are 505 institutions offering courses in school administration ... but less than 200 have the resources and commitment to provide the excellence called for by the Commission.... Because it is concerned about the great number of individuals being prepared and licensed in programs with inadequate resources and little commitment to quality, the Commission recommends that the campuses prepare fewer--better. (Leaders for America's Schools, 1987, p. 20)

In calling for school administrators to be held accountable for the condition of American public education, Griffiths (1988) was even more blunt: EA professors had better change "pretty damn quick" and improve how preparation programs did business, or watch their programs dismantled. Yet McCarthy (1988) distressedly noted in the same year that 85 percent of EA professors rated their programs good or excellent. A frightening question lurks: Are EA professors being lulled to sleep?

In this case study the ecology of games metaphor (Firestone, 1989) was used as a framework to determine which groups were influential in policy making. Different players (e.g., in this study, EA programs competing for legislature reauthorization, IHE general administration, legislators, principals, superintendents) have their own rules and often want to accomplish entirely different goals as they manipulate and maneuver for power and survival within the environmentally-induced relationships of competition, specialization, mutual non-involvement, cooperation, and interdependence. "Each game is a structured competition with its own rules, its own winners and losers, and sometimes its own audience that keeps score and responds to particular adept or inept play" (p. 18). According to this metaphor, policymaking is essentially political: groups vying for power in absence of rationally-arrived at goals and procedures for measuring those goals.

In extending this study's findings to those of other studies, Mazzoni's arena model (1991) was used. According to Mazzoni, education policymaking has shifted from the subsystem (an iron triangle consisting of some legislators, vested agencies, and interest groups) to the macro arena, including various leaders not included in subsystem politics, the media, and numerous grassroots constituencies.

Methodology

The two investigators, a university professor and PhD student in research and policy analysis, collected and analyzed the data for this study from 1995 to 1997. The unit of analysis was the

state in examining how the national calls for reform of public education translated into state centralization and loss of IHE autonomy.

Research Participants

In the spring, 1995 the investigators met with one prominent educator in this state and asked him to (a) identify various players influencial in the policy-setting process, and (b) suggest potential research participants representing the groups regarding the recent reform of school administration. The PhD student called each person and asked whether he or she would participate in this study. After being assured of anonymity, all individuals (n = 15) agreed to participate. Interview participants were: a legislator, an EA professor, a school of education dean, a legislative staffer, a prominent educator, a legislator, the standards board director, a standards board staffer, an external consultant, a business community representative, the governor's chief education adviser, and representatives from the professional associations (state school board, teachers, principals, and superintendents).

Data Collection and Analysis

Interviews averaging 45 minutes each were conducted from May 1995 through April 1996 and transcribed for analysis. (One research participant requested that the interview not be recorded.) Several questions were asked:

1) What was the long-term background for reform of the EA programs in this state?

2) What were the sources and pressures for change?

3) Who were the leading spokespersons and influencial groups in this reform?

4) Which group(s) had minimal political influence during this EA reform process?

Memoranda, legislative documents, and newspaper articles also were perused in developing and identifying themes in this study.

Data were analyzed according to principles of inductive research (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). When appropriate, data were coded and displayed on matrices for analysis (cf. Huberman & Miles, 1983). Tentative themes were confirmed and revised through further interview and mining of documents. To assure research participant anonymity, the investigators protected the identity of their sources (e.g., "one research participant ...") when citing politically-sensitive interview data.

Trustworthiness of the data was determined through triangulation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and through verification of themes by key informants. The investigators each made three iterations through the data and critiqued and verified each other's assertions in accounting for divergent perspectives. Several research participants commented and verified two broad themes as they emerged from the data. This study, therefore, had an interpretive outcome (Peshkin, 1993): providing insights, clarifying complexity, and developing system theory. Validity was considered not a property of instruments but a property of arguments (Cronbach 1988).

Case Background: The Lurking Potential for Hostile Action Against Universities

Two factors comprised the state political context. First, this state has a history of centralization, which is particularly evident in K-12 education. This state was one of several to mandate in the 1980s a standardized evaluation instrument for non-tenured K-12 teachers. Over the last decade and a half, the general assembly legislated four major K-12 reform initiatives. Among these legislative bills were (a) a 1989 basic education program around a common core of knowledge and skills which every child was expected to master to graduate from high school and (b) a performance-based accountability program based on school performance indicators in 1995.

Universities have not been immune to this state's history of centralization. The university system has a large, general administration with a history of micro-management, which often is entangled in political alliances with legislators. Legislators threatened to expand the number of EdD programs unilaterally from three to seven, unless the university general administration did so in the late 1980s. (The general administration complied.) In 1989, for instance, general administration began requiring for the EdD in education administration on all seven campuses a one-year residency requirement, during which students could not hold full-time jobs.

The second factor was deep-seated dissatisfaction by legislators and other constituents with lack of university initiative in responding to state needs. The legislative staffer provided this example from the late 1980s:

> The legislature told the Board of Governors, in conjunction with the State Board of education, to take a look at preservice recommendations for principals ... [but the] report was not received well here by the Education Oversight Committee. Part of the recommendation was to develop an EdD program ... and that just didn't link up with what people wanted here.

In retrospect, the IHE recommendations on improving administrative preservice made to the legislative joint education oversight committee in 1989 might have cauterized a long process ending with largely unilateral legislation inimical to IHEs in the 1990s. The university system was perceived as elitist and not sincerely committed to solving state-level problems. One state leader had an unpleasant experience with IHEs when, as a local superintendent, he initiate an innovative administrator preparation program that was blocked by the state university system and the state education agency. This leader assessed the situation: "In universities education remains a low priority. We had to destroy the old complacency."

A history of state centralization and long-term dissatisfaction with university responsiveness was complemented by the political climate of the 1990s, which had made public education particularly vulnerable. Influenced by A Nation at Risk (1983), A Time For Results (1986), and other reports, legislators and other leaders now believed that they represented their constituencies in demanding that public education adapt to changing societal needs. As the public outcry for improving public

schools remained unabated through the late 1980s, a major policy question continued to surface: Does the current crop of school leaders have potential as strong leaders and managers?

National dissatisfaction with university-delivered education programs had their counterpart in this state. Again, the legislative staffer:

> Legislators don't see schools of education connecting well enough with public schools. I can show you a series of bills that have been awkwardly framed in requiring university faculty to work in public schools. They [legislators] simply don't see university professors ... as making a difference, even if they are connected.

National dissatisfaction with administrator preparation programs in particular also had its counterpart at the state level: "The legislature has had a history of concern about the quality of administrative training" (the legislative staffer). The state school board representative commented: "We should not be rubber-stamping administrators. Apparently no one [in this state] had ever failed any one of the programs [of which twelve were housed in public universities].... Business and industry groups had begun to question the present level of leadership."

Business had become an extremely influential player on the state education policy stage. Convinced that public education was failing its children and that higher education achievement would result in economic development, business leaders expressed concern with EA program candidates. The Business Committee for Education executive director had this to say:

> The business community recognizes a strong link between economic development and educational achievement, so there's a keen interest ... in initiating those things that have the potential to impact the systemic improvement of public education. The quality initiative that we're sponsoring is about leadership and change in cultures of school systems and organizations.... The administrator's leadership role is a perfect match for us.

Commented the state school board member: "Business and industry had begun to come into education ... and wanted accountability. They wanted rigorous standards and they wanted employees who would be successful in their own businesses."

The business self-interest group was well organized and had a history of political influence within this state. The business umbrella group consisted of a coalition of three organizations, founded in 1983 through a governor's council: Citizens for Business and Industry, a public school forum, and the Business Committee for Education. Through this coalition the business community had spread its tentacles deep into the education infrastructure and was actively involved in framing major policy issues in the state legislature. Coalition members served on the federal laboratory board and sponsored projects that had representatives from the teacher professional association and the state education agency.

In addition to its political infrastructure the business community also had become well-informed about major education issues:

> We stay abreast ... whether it be issues of equity in funding, best practices for teaching.... The business community constantly looks for ways to add value to education at the best possible cost ... how do you learn from each other. The Business Committee is a committee about inclusion. (executive director, Business Committee for Education)

The legislative staffer summed up this state's political backdrop: "If you follow the history, after 1983, you've got this general public perception that ... schools of education aren't connecting well with public schools. Legislators are responding to their constituents." National and state views of weak EA programs, the perceived inability of universities to reform from within, a state history of centralization, and external, public pressure for change and improvement in public education led by the business community all converged to set the stage for unilateral legislature action within which IHE downsizing and loss of autonomy might occur. Observed an external consultant responsible for development of assessment instruments based on performance indicators: "Too little quality, too many programs." The dean summed up the picture, "It was clear that the co-chairs of the Education Legislative Oversight Committee were moving toward legislation."

Case Analysis

Phase I: Reform Through Legislative Oversight

Two key leaders leveraged the broadly-based public dissatisfaction with education administration programs. One leader

was a former school superintendent, and in the early 1990s a member of the university general administration as a lobbyist with the legislature. He was both an idealist (a statewide reputation for advocating what was best for children) and a political activist ("[H]e was always in the room, pushing me to consider reduction [of programs] working the various groups at break"). This state leader became convinced that public education has failed to realize the potential of the leader:

> Leaders are important. You can find [a bad leader] in one school with teachers waiting to retire, bad test scores, and parents upset with their school. In another school parents say, "Don't touch our principal." The teachers won't retire until the principal leaves.... Change the leadership and the roles reverse.

The second leader was a former educator with a sincere interest in children who remained steadfast in her conviction that education always had a future for this state's children. As co-chair of the general assembly's Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, she provided the basis for the coming legislation:

> The overall purpose was to improve entrance requirements of public school administrators.... We have to be accountable to the public.... We knew we were training more administrators than we had slots for. Another reason for the legislation was to pare down the number of programs.

Both leaders had developed a good faith mindset that EA programs had to be reduced (there were twelve public university

programs) and admissions and licensure standards established to provide better K-12 leadership. These leaders expressed, and perhaps also contributed to, an ideology within this state not disconnected from national dissatisfaction with EA programs: pare down the programs; prepare fewer leaders better (as suggested by the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration); and set high standards, since standards allegedly do not exist for EA programs. Behind this ideology was the sincere belief that the education system needed some shaking up. "I saw this reform phase as externally driven ... not something internally driven by either professors or within the development of the profession," observed the Business Community for Education director. Added a staffer from the Standards Board, "The business community was strongly behind this legislation. They want to see stronger leaders for schools." (The resulting legislation would specify one member from business and industry on the Task Force.)

A major spark in the tinder box for legislation action was a growing perception that the state had an oversupply administrator-certificated persons who did not hold administrative positions. (The business committee executive director had heard that for every vacancy there were a hundred certified people.)

The legislators in July 1992 with the help of an external consultant enacted House Bill 1361 (passed by the assembly in 1991) to authorize an education leadership task force to look at the issues of quality in the principalship and superintendency. They mandated the eighteen-member committee composition: one dean from a school of education; four legislators; the teacher of the

year, superintendent of the year, and principal of the year; two members from the state education agency; the chief state school office or designee; two members of the board of governors; two representatives, one from each of two professional schools; one representative from business and industry and one representative from the school board association; and one parent of a public school child. Committee members were chosen by their constituencies as specified in the legislation (e.g., two state education agency members appointed by the SEA chair); the legislative leader identified as a key player in this study was chosen by legislators as a task force member.

One professor would be chosen from public administration and the other from a business school. There were no professors from education administration on this task force. "Our [professor] organization very much wanted to be part of this process but essentially was shut out until the Standards Board was in place," assessed the EA professor.

The legislative leader, however, countered that the legislation called for university representation, not schools of education. On the task force were three deans (including a dean of a school of education), a professor in public administration, and a facilitator from another out-of-state university. To say no professors of education were on the Task Force, she believed, was inaccurate.

The rumored oversupply of 3,000 unemployed persons with active certificates would be given substance by a series of studies attributed to the university general administration in

Appendix E of the Educational Leadership Task Team report. (According to one source, the Task Force had requested this research from the legislative staffer.) Several players throughout the state, however, criticized the validity of these studies, which were flawed methodically. There actually was going to be a shortage within the next five years, according to the EA professor. The chief state school officer also predicted a severe shortage of school administrators. "The [initial series of studies] study was botched," concluded another research participant.[1]

The Educational Leadership Task Force in 1993 made ten recommendations to the joint education oversight committee, including: (a) reducing the number of preparation programs by at least fifty percent; (b) charging the Board of Governors to develop a plan in which various campuses competed for re-authorization of their programs, (c) establishing a working committee to address issues of creating and instituting selection criteria that are more rigorous and more tightly linked to successful administrator practice, and (d) forming an independent professional standards board for school administration charged with developing and implementing an administrator examination for licensure and standards for a potential administrator certification (Executive Summary Report, February 15, 1993).

The final legislation in June 1993 (House Bill 257), based on the Task Force recommendations approved by the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, reflected highly centralized language: (a) "The Board of Governors shall develop and implement

a competitive process and criteria for assessing proposals ...."; (b) "No more than seven school administrator programs shall be established ...."; and (c) " ... the board of Governors shall convene a Quality Candidate Committee to create admissions criteria for its School Administrator Training Program and to assist local education agencies in developing procedures to hire the best qualified candidates." The legislators also charged the Board of Governors to conduct the competitive process whereby the EA programs would be downsized: a request for authorization with specific guidelines would be developed; and an external, four-member panel of experts would recommend up to seven programs to the Board of Governors for its approval. In September 1994 the Board of Governors approved the university-system president's recommendation that seven programs be reauthorized. (An eighth program later was reauthorized through separate legislation.)

In July 1993 in House Bill 284 the general assembly established the Standards Board for Public School Administration. This board was to be located in the office of the governor who was charged with appointing seven members to the board: two superintendents, three principals, a retired teacher, and a school of education dean (who was to be the same dean who had been a member of the leadership task force). A list of potential nominations was compiled by the governor. There were several names from each category. Members were chosen on the basis of recommendations from the governor's advisory staff.

In sum, two state leaders leveraged national and state views of weak EA programs, a perceived inability of universities to

reform from within, a state history of centralization, and external, public pressure for change and improvement in public education to legislate the machinery for reform of education administration. The task force might have represented those very forces in making recommendations to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee--recommendations accepted with apparently little debate by the legislature. The ten task force recommendations (e.g., bring the supply of and the demand for school administrators into better balance; reduce the number of preparation programs by fifty percent; establish an independent professional standards board) are consonant both with the political backdrop of the state and with the final legislation.

This first policy-setting phase consisted of legislative oversight accomplished as a closed, non-participatory, and competitive process: "closed, non-participatory" because EA professors were not represented on the task force, which then recommended the legislation; and "competitive" because only up to seven programs would be re-authorized. Secrecy and ambiguity, according to one anonymous source, characterized this policy setting process: "[There] would be a group and you really didn't know who they were and what they were doing ... and what criteria were being issued... So, it was really a kind of secretive, closed process prior to the institution of the Standards Board."

One (anonymous) research participant retrospectively viewed the ensuing competition among the twelve universities for reauthorization as distrustful. Universities were not sharing information with other universities. "People at [one university]

weren't going to call up the people at [another university] and say, 'Here's what we're doing, what are you doing?'... People's careers were damaged in this process." In addition to the competition, the fact that only one of the four historically-black schools had its program reauthorized made the downsizing process unsatisfactory to African Americans in higher education.

Phase II: Setting Standards for School Administrator Licensure

With the legal machinery in place for reform of EA programs, there occurred a policy shift in setting performance dimensions and behavioral indicators for school administrator licensure and possibly advanced certification.[2] In fact, the task team proposal's tone in establishing administrator standards may be interpreted as far more collaborative than other recommendations: "We suggest that the general assembly charge the ... [EA] professor association, the state association of school administrators, the state board of education, and the board of governors with the task of establishing a commission..."

The major player in the standards setting process was Jim, a former superintendent and a university adjunct EA professor, who, after a national search, was appointed by the standards board as its executive director. Jim emerged as a co-optive leader skillful in bringing together stockholder advisory groups (e.g., parents, business leaders, principal and superintendent associations, EA professors).

A second, although behind-the-scenes, major player in the standards-building stage was the business community. The Business Committee for Education executive director and Jim had known each

other for years, according to the former, when Jim had been a school administrator in a county recognized for active business involvement. After his appointment to the standards board, Jim approached the business committee executive director and asked what the committee's interest might be in standards:

> Jim and I started talking about how the Standards Board can tap into the Business Committee as a resource of feedback and advice for what the business community thinks people to be licensed should have in attributes, characteristics, skills. (executive director of the Business Committee for Education)

This conversation initiated between Jim and the Business Committee for Education an ongoing collaboration. Jim did a presentation on potential proficiencies, skills, and attributes that public school administrators should have to the Committee's full board of directors. There then were several mailings, additional feedback, conversations. Jim, invited back by the board, presented a draft copy of what the performance dimensions at that current stage of development. At this point Jim received feedback from the board that school leaders need to be far more inclusive (i.e., what leaders do to empower other people in the school organization to move the organization forward). (Performance dimension No. 5 was later to read: Facilitates school improvement by engaging the school community's stakeholders... [Standards Board Report to State Board of Education, December 7, 1995].)

According to the research participants three other major players were, in this order, the principals, superintendents, and EA professors. The tenor of this commission, in stark contrast to the legislation, was broad consensus-building from stakeholders constituencies, and was professional and collegial (EA professor: a lot of professors contributed their expertise). Observed the principal association representative:

> We can set some standards by which we try to make sure that, along with the universities, we do have quality administrative candidates. I look at it much like the bar association or the medical association. They're very selective.... We need to police our own ranks.

The executive director of the standards commission in 1995 toured the state and involved stockholder involvement from nine advisory stockholder groups representing: (1) principals, (2) superintendents, (3) education administration professors, (4) business and industry, (5) parents, (6) high school students, (7) school board members, (8) teachers, and (9) other school personnel (e.g., finance, counselors, custodians).

One example of this consensus-building among stakeholders process was an interactive teleconference conducted on May 4, 1995. EA professors facilitated these teleconferences from campuses across the state. Major participants were superintendents and principals. The purpose of this teleconference was to elicit feedback from deans, EA department chairs, and EA professors regarding the developed performance dimensions--the skills and knowledge successful principals and superintendents should have

for quality schools (Standards Board memoranda of April 11; April 25; and May 15, 1995). The various stockholder groups then were to develop behavioral indicators linked to these performance dimensions.

In setting performance dimensions and behavioral indicators, there were four sources of information: the Standard Board's own vision, structured surveys of school administrators and stockholder advisory groups, performance competencies developed by national organizations and other states, and technical job analyses (Standards Board Update, April 1, 1995). Through the stockholder, consensus-building process, ten performance dimensions for principal preparation programs were identified (e.g., facilitates shared vision; promotes strategies to enhance student learning; ensures safe and secure school climate; and facilitates school improvement through collaboration and empowerment). Indicators for each dimension also were determined collegially through scenario construction and the knowledge, skills, and professional perspectives deemed necessary to successfully solve problems presented in the scenarios. Each of the nine advisory groups had representatives on a 30-member sub-committee that worked to develop initial drafts of indicators. Then all members of the standards board advisory groups were given opportunities to review indicators defining the ten performance dimensions (memorandum from the board's director, December 4, 1995). As the third step in this process, assessments linked to indicators were being sent out as requests for proposals to

testing contractors at the time data for this study were being collected. Testing for licensure was slated to begin in 1998.

Where were the EA professors in this second policy-setting phase? EA professor influence was third, just behind that of principals and superintendents. According to the EA professor: "The professors had greater influence on the performance domains [than the behavioral indicators]. They sat down and commented on the various domains. There had been earlier discussions with [Jim] and the [Standards] Board members. They were able to review, reword, and rewrite the domains."

EA professors were players in developing performance dimensions and indicators. For example, in early 1995 EA professors in a two-day workshop:

(1) reviewed national standards and stakeholder proposals,

(2) used breakout groups to begin identifying performance capabilities of school administrators, the knowledge base supporting these capabilities, and indicators of these capabilities, and

(3) also used breakout groups to identify assessment principles and the format matrix and to learn about assessment models and the role of universities in developing assessment instruments (Agenda: Professors of Educational Leadership Advisory Meeting, February 3-4, 1995). At this meeting a philosophical debate ensued over whether the multiple choice, standardized instrument could measure performance domains.

As a second example of EA professor influence, at a three-day workshop used to translate broad performance dimensions into

behavioral indicators in 1995, there were three professors of 34 work group participants; others were principals, graduate students, SEA personnel, school board members, superintendents, business and industry leaders, and state school board representatives (Agenda: Board Performance Indicators Workshop, September 20-22, 1995). Most important, each professor facilitated a work group (with the fourth group facilitated by a graduate student).

Yet for three reasons EA professor influence seemed circumscribed. First, there were no professors on the school administrator standards board. The intent of the board was practitioner-driven. Commented the director of the Standards Board: "If there is going to be a standards board for principals and superintendents, it ought to be made up of principals and superintendents." Second, the subcommittee which coordinated the efforts of the nine advisory stakeholder groups, had principals as the largest constituency (eight); professors had three representatives on this committee. Third, because of the inclusive, consensus-building nature of this second stage, EA professors comprised but one of four groups with major influence on the standards-building process. They appeared to be facilitators of a collegial process whose input mainly consisted of practitioners: the superintendents and principals who would be directly affected by the licensure.

Surmised the business leader:

> In looking at the university piece ... you could see some potentially threatening things if you're in charge of the

> preparation program that basically is going to be told this is what we're saying people need to look like when they are quote/unquote "at the point of getting ready to be licensed," and in fact, this is what the assessment needs to look like. I would think that the schools of educational leadership [sic] would have serious concerns about the work of the standards board.

What ultimately matters, however, according to the external assessment consultant, were performance indicators and, particularly, the assessments: "That is where the rubber hits the road." Testing of principal candidates, originally legislated as beginning in 1997, was postponed until 1998.

Regardless of how much influence EA professors had in setting standards for principal (and superintendent) licensure, the political impetus in this second policy-setting phase was grassroots--largely from both the business community and from superintendents and principals. A savvy, consensus-building executive director of the Standards Board facilitated a broad, consensus building process, which, according to the EA professor, has " ... gone a long way to alleviate that anger of a kind of secretive, non-participatory process used in the first policy-setting stage. I think [Jim] and the Standards Board and the dean [the Task Force member who was now chair of the Standards Board] have all done a wonderful job of reversing a trend... and really making this a much more open process."

Summary and Discussion

Two policymaking phases (legislative oversight and consensus-building among stakeholders) emerged from this case analysis. In the first phase, two key leaders leveraged a confluence of forces in mandating the legislated machinery for, among other things (a) reduction of EA programs, (b) quality standards for entrance to EA programs, and (c) standards for administrator licensure. EA professors had little influence during this phase because legislators had become impatient with the perceived university incapacity for internal change and because professors were perceived as part of the problem.

A major function of organizations is buffering its technical core from external environment threats (Ogawa, 1996, citing Aldrich, 1979; Thompson, 1967). Yet in this first, policy-setting phase, the university system seemed relatively powerless in protecting its turf from legislative oversight. The two players skillfully leveraged broad-based, public discontent into highly centralized policy ("There shall be no more than seven EA programs ..."). The public, often latently hostile toward universities and public education in general, and public universities almost functioned as seamless entities. House (1994, citing the Pew Higher Education Research Program [1991]) comments:

> The loss of sanctuary [for IHEs] means among other things, that the public, in the form of regulators, budget officers, state and federal legislative staffs, higher education commissions, accrediting bodies, and emboldened boards of

trustees, will want a seat at the table. (House (1994, p. 29, citing the Pew Higher Education Research Program [1991])

What seemed to drive this legislative oversight process was an ideology (e.g., cap the number of programs; end principal candidate self-selection; set standards for admission and licensure) so mesmerizing that key state leaders chose to go with only one research source on perceived oversupply of certified principals even though (a) a second study contradicted the first study's conclusions and (b) the chief state school officer predicted a severe shortage of certified principals.

Interestingly, although the Leadership Task Force included in their references the landmark report of education administration, Leaders for America's Schools, it did not include the James Bliss supply-and-demand study reported in that volume. The state that was the subject of this current study was one of four states reported by Bliss with a shortage of certified administrators. Although data for the Bliss study were collected in the mid 1980s, one might have expected some reference to this study. Have circumstances changed so drastically from the mid- 1980s to the convening of the Educational Task Force in October 1992?

This use of research is remindful of Weiss's (1980) observation. Social science research is used far more in legitimizing positions (p. 389) than in objectifying a rational, step-by-step policy-making process in which research is used to identify policy choices and then their advantages and disadvantages studies to determine the one best solution. The political table had been set through the 1980s for legislative

action: "Too many programs, too little program quality." The rumored over-supply of certified school administrators in this state seemed to provide the impetus for the legislative machinery to churn into action.

The legislators could have set program quality standards first and then based the competitive process for program reauthorization based on those standards. (This suggestion was attributed to an anonymous research participant in this study.) Program performance indicators might have included the number of administrator certificates produced annually by each program and "downstream" data: Which programs produced certified administrators who obtained administrative positions? What were the student outcomes of their schools?

With the legislated machinery in place for program reduction, and standards both for admission and licensure, the policy-making process switched gears to a democratic, collegial model, as school administrator standards were determined through constituency voice, partly perhaps to garner grass roots support after a competitive program authorization process. The second policy setting phase in this study was inclusive and involved the business community as the behind-the-scenes player, with the superintendency and principal associations and EA professors, to some extent, having major influence. Yet two circumstances (EA professors as one of four major policy-influencing groups numbers; no professors on the Standards Board) imply that the public also very much had a seat at the table and a big one at that in the

form of principals and superintendents who were going to have to pass the licensure examinations.

Analytic Generalizations

According to Mazzoni, education policymaking used to be made within the subsystem arena model: a small and stable group of committee-based lawmakers, agency bureaucrats, and established group representatives able to dominate institutional agenda and direct policymaking processes in an issue domain (p. 117). Mazzoni used the "iron triangle" as an analogy: mutual accommodation and interest representation are pivotal norms. In this policymaking model public visibility is low, and press for major policy changes scant, since group interests are already represented at the bargaining table and lawmakers accept these interests as legitimate and prone to favorable treatment.

Members of the iron triangle historically commonly include SEAs, schools of education, and school districts, who protect their flanks through mutual accommodation and commonly-held perspectives from major policy changes. The impetus for education reform, however, both has (a) grown in intensity thorough the 1980s and (b) shifted from the federal level to the state level. These two changes, according to Mazzoni, resulted in the "macro politics" arena model. Policymaking now is far more visible, accessible, contentious, and ideological than in the subsystem area (Mazzoni, citing Chandler, Chandler, & Vogler, 1974). Top-level elected officials, including executive heads and legislative leaders, promote policy positions and search for grassroots constituents and mass audiences. As a result, newly energized

groups enter the arena and compete with established interests: "Ideological confrontation accompanies or displaces pluralistic bargaining" (Mazzoni, p. 117, citing Peterson, 1972).

Mazzoni then amended the arena macro model to include leadership and commissions. Leaders have positional and party resources and political credits earned through past favors and IOUs and often can launch and steer proposals through the shoals of legislatures. Commissions, where challenging groups have equal representation, can be useful in legitimating, consolidates, and expands potential new policy in its scope.

When comparing this study's findings to the revised arena model there is considerable applicability. Two key leaders (a prominent educator and legislator) leveraged broad grassroots dissatisfaction with public education, particularly from the business community, in shifting the political negotiations and bargaining away from the subsystem (iron triangle) to an enlarged group of players. These two leaders were influencial in enacting legislation in 1992 that formed a leadership task force. This commission then made ten recommendations largely legislated in 1993. Absent from this task force was a major representative of the iron triangle, the EA professors, who had the most to lose from a change in policy (reducing programs, standards for school administrator).

So in the first legislative oversight phase, there were two deviations from the Mazzoni model. The commission did not have challenging groups equally represented with established groups, that is, no EA professors. Second, the two leaders were by no

means outside the subsystem as, for instance, policy entrepreneurs. One was a lobbyist for the university system general administration and the other co-chair of the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee. What might have enabled these two leaders to enact a major policy shift that circumscribed IHE autonomy was the political context of this state: national and state views of weak EA programs, the perceived inability of universities to reform from within, a state history of centralization, and external, public pressure for change and improvement in public education led by the business community.

In the second policy-setting phase (setting standards for school administrator licensure), there were two comparisons with Mazzoni's macro arena political dynamics. First, according to an anonymous source, the legislator leader made sure that the standards board would be housed in the governor's office, not in the state education agency, a traditional player in the iron triangle. Second, the commission in the second phase (the standards board) again mirrored the task force in that no EA professors were on the board. Both the task force and standards board excluded a major player directly or indirectly affected by the work of the commissions. It is true that the standards setting phase included nine advisory groups as stakeholders representing the entire spectrum of self-interest groups, including EA professors.

In the standards setting phase the leader played mediator and facilitator essentially among four groups (principals, superintendents, business, and EA professors) as performance

dimensions and behavioral indicators were identified collegially. In this phase there are three groups from within the arena subsystem (principals, superintendents, EA professors) and one group from the macro arena (business). This phase, then, seems an admixture of subsystem and macro arena. Like the first policy phase, the key leader (a former superintendent and adjunct professor) was from within the iron triangle (i.e., a former superintendent and EA adjunct professor). Yet its commission, if the standards board can be considered such, was not represented democratically.

In conclusion, the circumstance that all three leaders were from within the public education subsystem may highlight the relative impotence of higher education (in this case education administration) when it is confronted with such national and state criticism about issues of program quality. This study should be a wakeup call to the EA field in particular and to higher education in general. There is no reason to assume that political, professional, and economic conditions in this state differ substantially from those in other states. State centralization in the form of program downsizing, standards setting by groups outside the pale of IHEs, and the resulting diminution of autonomy seem to presage higher education through at least the next decade.

Endnotes

[1]Educational Leadership Task Force report in February 1993 would cite supply-and-demand studies conducted by the university general administration and by the state education agency that, as of November 1992, there were 1,157 persons with certificates who were currently not working in any capacity in this state's school systems. Another 2,145 had state certification and were working in this state's school systems but were not paid as administrators. The total 3,302 (1,157 + 2,145) was enough, so concluded the task force, to "fill nearly every existing administrative position in the state." These conclusions, however, were refuted by a 1994 study. The legislatively-authorized quality candidate committee in September 1994 included in Appendix D of its final report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee another supply-and-demand study projection from 1993-94 through 2002-03 conducted by the university general administration in February 1994 that predicted a shortage of certified administrators. On p. D-3 the researcher(s) of this second supply-and-demand study concluded: "The moderate and high projections both suggest that the number of program completers [of EA programs] ... will need to increase in the next nine years over the average level of 300 per year attained over the past five years. The increase needed will be at least 17 percent according to these projections" (emphasis added).

[2]According to the Educational Task Force proposals, administrator candidates must pass the state examination based on performance dimensions and behavioral indicators of the standards board. Those who passed could then apply to the state education

agency for licensure. The task force envisioned that more advanced measures of administrative performance would lead to board certification (an action similar to that advocated both by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and the National Policy Board for Educational Administration).

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